

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 OMB-01 IO-14 EB-11 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3843

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, JA

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTION TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION SPEECH
RECEIVED HEAVY MEDIA PLAY AND INDUCED FLOOD OF STATEMENTS
BY JAPANESE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS. TREATING
EVENT WITH SOBRIETY, THEY PRAISED PRESIDENT'S PAST
ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPRESSED REGRET AT NECESSITY OF HIS
DEPARTURE. MANY OBSERVERS SAW RESIGNATION AS
NECESSARY END RESULT OF VIABLE AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS AND ANTICIPATED MORE EFFECTIVE US LEADERSHIP
BASED ON SUPPORT OF INCREASINGLY UNITED PEOPLE. MOST DID
NOT EXPECT MAJOR CHANGE IN US FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION,
ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SOME APPREHENSION, US MAY PLACE GREATER
STRESS ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AT EXPENSE OF INTERNATIONAL
INVOLVEMENTS.

1. PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION SPEECH, CARRIED LIVE
ON LATE MORNING TELEVISION, DOMINATED MEDIA.

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INITIAL TREATMENT WAS RESTRAINED, SOBER AND LARGELY

RESTRICTED TO STRAIGHT NEWS REPORTING, ALTHOUGH SPATE OF COMMENTARY IN DAYS AHEAD SEEMS LIKELY. NHK TELEVISION COMMENTATORS IMMEDIATELY AFTER SPEECH SAID IT SEEMED LIKELY THAT PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION SHOULD HELP BRING TOGETHER AMERICANS, WHO HAVE BEEN DIVIDED BY VIETNAM AND LATER BY WATERGATE ISSUES. THEY ALSO SAID THEY EXPECTED LITTLE CHANGE IN US FOREIGN POLICY TO RESULT FROM INAUGURATION OF NEW PRESIDENT. NOTING CONTINUED PRESENCE OF SECRETARY KISSINGER, EARLY PRESS REPORTS SAID PREVAILING VIEW IS THAT THERE WILL BE NO FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS IN US FOREIGN POLICY GENERALLY OR TOWARD JAPAN SPECIFICALLY. THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION, HOWEVER, THAT, AS RESULT OF AMERICAN PREOCCUPATION WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND PERCEIVED DOMESTIC ORIENTATION OF NEW PRESIDENT, US MAY PLACE RELATIVELY GREATER WEIGHT ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS THAN IN PAST. IN ADDITION TO PRESS PLAY, PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION PRODUCED DELUGE OF STATEMENTS BY GOJ OFFICIALS, PARTY SPOKESMEN, AND BUSINESS LEADERS ON IMPLICATION OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS IN WASHINGTON.

2. FORMAL GOJ RESPONSE TO RESIGNATION ENBODIED IN STATEMENT BY CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY NIKAI DO (SEPT), WHICH PROMISED CONTINUED US-JAPAN COOPERATION, EMPHASIZED PAST ACHIEVEMENTS OF VICE PRESIDENT FORD AND UNDERScoreD PRESIDENT NIXON'S MANY FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUCCEsSES, INCLUDING ENHANCED RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, EXEMPLIFIED BY OKINAWA REVERSION. FOREIGN MINISTER KIMURA ALSO TOLD PRESS HE ANTICIPATED CONTINUED CLOSE JAPAN-US RELATIONS AND NO RADICAL CHANGES IN US FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICIES. HE ADDED THAT HE HOPED TO MEET PRESIDENT FORD WHEN HE TRAVELS TO US FOR UNGA IN SEPTEMBER. NEWSMAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT DURING AUGUST 8 PRESS BACKGROUNDER, KIMURA HAD INDICATED SOME CONCERN THAT, AS PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT FORD MIGHT CONCENTRATE MORE ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND LESS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THAN HAD PRESIDENT NIXON. THIS VIEW IS REPORTEDLY SHARED BY OTHER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO THINK NEW PRESIDENT MIGHT PLACE MORE STRESS ON DOMESTIC MATTERS, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC AREA. HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THERE IS CONSENSUS THAT LONG-STANDING CLOSE US-JAPAN TIES WILL NOT BE WEAKENED BY CHANGE OF PRESIDENTS.

3. AFTERNOON PRESS CARRIED STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER TANAKA PRESSING REGRET AT TURN OF EVENTS AND STATING THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HOLD TALKS WITH NEW PRESIDENT AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. PAPERS SAID GOJ WILL BE CONSIDERING POSSIBILITIES FOR TANAKA CALL

ON PRESIDENT FORD IN US AT TIME OF PRIME MINISTER'S
SEPTEMBER TRIP TO MEXICO, BRAZIL, AND CANADA.

4. LDP SEC GEN HASHIMOTO EXPRESSED HIS PARTY'S REGRET
AT PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION AND EMPHASIZED PRESIDENT'S
POSITIVE FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS, POINTING TO
INCREASED STABILITY IN ASIA, DETENTE, PEACE IN
MID-EAST, AND RETURN OF OKINAWA TO JAPAN. HE SAID
LDP WOULD CONTINUE TO PROMOTE CLOSE JAPANESE RELATIONS
WITH US UNDER LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT FORD. JSP AND
DSP BOTH STRESSED THAT RESIGNATION REFLECTED STRENGTH
OF AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND WERE JOINED BY
KOMEITO IN INDICATING THAT LDP LEADERSHIP SHOULD PAY
CLOSE HEED TO "FATE THAT BEFALLS THOSE WHO ABUSE
POWER". JCP USED RESIGNATION AS DEPARTURE POINT FOR
STANDARD FARE DENUNCIATION OF "CORRUPT US IMPERIALISM".

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5. BUSINESS LEADERS ENDORSED NOTION THAT PRESIDENT'S
DECISION DEMONSTRATED CONTINUING GOOD HEALTH OF
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND SAID THAT THEY DID NOT EXPECT
CHANGE IN PRESIDENTS TO IMPINGE ON CLOSE US-JAPAN

RELATIONS. WHILE THERE WERE SOME EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN THAT NEW PRESIDENT MIGHT GIVE PRIORITY TO DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND US FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVES MIGHT RECEDE, MOST BUSINESS LEADERS BELIEVED THAT US WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT ADOPT PROTECTIONIST POLICIES. GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC OFFICIALS AGREED THAT NO SHORT-RANGE CHANGES IN US-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP SEEMED LIKELY.

SOME SAID THAT NOW THAT US ON WAY TO RESOLVING DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS IT SHOULD ONCE AGAIN BE ABLE TO TAKE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SPHERE AND TO PROMOTE SOLUTION OF TRADE AND ENERGY QUESTIONS. OTHERS, HOWEVER, FEARED RELAXATION OF ECONOMIC RESTRAINTS, NEW ROUND OF INFLATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PROTECTIONIST TRADE BARRIERS.

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6. ONE OTHER CONSEQUENCE OF PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION ACCORDING TO SOME NEWSPAPERS WAS THAT LONG-PENDING QUESTION OF VISIT EXCHANGE BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND EMPEROR HAS BEEN RESOLVED. THEY NOTED THAT VISIT AGREED TO IN AUGUST 1972 JOINT COMMUNIQUE INVOLVED PRESIDENT NIXON PERSONALLY AND WOULD NOT APPLY TO SUCCESSOR.

7. COMMENT: WHILE VOLUME AND DIVERSITY OF INITIAL REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO SORT THEM OUT, RECURRING THEMES -- SOME ALREADY PREVALENT IN RECENT WEEKS -- HAVE EMERGED. THESE INCLUDE FOLLOWING IDEAS AND PROPOSITIONS: CHAIN OF EVENTS CULMINATING IN PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION UNDERSCORE RESILIENCY AND VIABILITY OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY (WITH LESSONS IMPLIED FOR GOJ). NEW PRESIDENT IS NOT WELL-KNOWN IN JAPAN AND HIS POLICY ORIENTATION IS STILL SOMETHING OF QUESTION MARK. LITTLE CHANGE IS EXPECTED IN US-JAPAN RELATIONS -- AT LEAST IN NEAR FUTURE -- ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME CONCERN ABOUT RESURGENCE OF ISOLATIONISM AND RETURN TO ECONOMIC PROTECTIONISM. WITH RESOLUTION OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL RIFTS, IT IS HOPED US WILL BE ABLE TO REASSERT LEADERSHIP ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.
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